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ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFIC AND SUPPLY, INCLUDING REPORTS FROM THE SUBSIDIARY BODIES

Reports from subsidiary bodies

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMISSION ON ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFIC AND RELATED MATTERS IN THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST ON ITS THIRTY-FIRST SESSION, HELD AT AMMAN FROM 9 TO 13 MARCH 1996

Summary

The present addendum to the note by the Secretariat on reports from subsidiary bodies reflects the current situation with respect to agreements and arrangements concerning cooperation in the region of the Subcommission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East. Various matters brought to the attention of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs are contained in the report of the Subcommission which is before the Commission.

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I. MATTERS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

1. The Subcommission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East at its thirty-first session, held at Amman from 9 to 13 March 1996, adopted the recommendations of its working groups contained in chapter I of the report of the Subcommission on its thirty-first session (UNDCP/SUBCOM/1996/6). The recommendations were addressed mainly to Governments of the region, and are brought to the attention of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs for information. Direct references to the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) are limited to recommendations 1 (c), 4 and 8 set forth in chapter I of the report of the Subcommission.

II. CURRENT SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO AGREEMENTS AND ARRANGEMENTS CONCERNING COOPERATION IN THE REGION

2. It was emphasized that the problem of drug abuse and illicit trafficking affected all countries of the region, and had become so complicated that simple solutions or unilateral national action would no longer be suitable. The magnitude of the illicit drugs problem was a reflection of the limited success of countermeasures taken in the region. More effective cooperation among States had to be pursued, including various forms of bilateral action.

3. The exchange of timely information on a reciprocal basis was considered to be crucial and in urgent need of improvement. Other improvements required within the region were identified as an upgrading of communication facilities, establishment of a standardized format for the storing of data, and greater joint work on courier monitoring.

4. A number of matters of special concern in the region, warranting the attention of the Subcommission and requiring immediate plans and measures of cooperation, were as follows:

(a) Heroin and opium were increasingly being transported across five member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in central Asia (Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), mainly from Afghanistan to countries of Europe;

(b) In Afghanistan, the extent of illicit opium poppy cultivation and illicit manufacture of morphine and heroin remained a serious problem, and the number of clandestine heroin laboratories had increased, many being located in the northern part of the country, in close proximity to its borders with Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, facilitating the procurement of chemicals needed for heroin manufacture;

(c) In Kazakstan, large amounts of acetic anhydride were manufactured and illicitly used to manufacture heroin in so-called kitchen laboratories;

(d) In 1994, law enforcement authorities in Georgia detected experimental illicit cultivation of coca bush in Adjaria, an area in the country with a subtropical climate, and in the mountains of Svatenia. According to local authorities, cultivation of coca bush on a large scale in Georgia was apparently planned by traffickers;

(e) The United Arab Emirates had been used as a transit point to divert substances for the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine and of morphine.

5. Another issue of particular concern to member States of the Subcommission was the substitution of alternative crops for opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. It was proposed that the matter be placed on the agenda of the next sessions of the Subcommission, so as to find a workable solution to a pressing problem of subregional, regional and international dimensions. In that connection, greater efforts should be made by UNDCP, calling on all available resources of the States concerned and affected, to set up programmes of eradication and interdiction of illicit production of opium. Each State of the region should assume responsibility for, and take part in, rural development and crop replacement in Afghanistan. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed the willingness of his Government to take immediate, active steps to promote crop substitution and rural development, in close cooperation with UNDCP and other States, by purchasing products such as wheat, cotton and rice from Afghan farmers at prices higher than they could obtain from illicit crops, by contributing to road construction, and by assisting in preventive education and public awareness campaigns for Afghan farmers.

6. It was pointed out that there were deficiencies in the legal codification of mutual legal assistance in the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.[1] Furthermore, there was a need to increase bilateral and multilateral arrangements and agreements as called for under article 7 of that Convention. The Subcommission might wish to consider ways in which those deficiencies might be rectified.

7. A number of regional or regionally important initiatives were reported to have taken place in recent years. National interministerial coordinating committees on drug control had been established in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, encouraging CIS member States to speed up the adoption of new drug control laws.

8. A project initiated in 1994, in cooperation with UNDCP, to strengthen law enforcement capacities along the border between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan was leading to an improvement in cross-border cooperation.

9. A meeting organized by UNDCP, with the participation of Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, to improve cooperation in, and coordination of, drug control had resulted in improved cooperation among the parties concerned.

10. The Governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Turkey had entered into various arrangements for exchanges of information, some of which had been of vital importance in investigating cases of drug trafficking, leading to arrests and seizures.

11. The Governments of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Syrian Arab Republic had intensified cooperation in the exchange of information. The United Arab Emirates has entered into a series of memoranda of understanding and bilateral agreements with France, Germany, Pakistan and the United States of America, also concerning the exchange of information on drug control.

12. The States of the Gulf Cooperation Council continued to renew and express their full support for subregional cooperation and coordination in all matters of drug control.

13. The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), a regional institution comprising 10 member States, had broadened its scope of cooperation. Within ECO, a committee had been established to coordinate regional cooperation, an expert group had been formed to prepare plans of action that would serve as a framework and mechanism for specific cooperative projects, and an action plan had been adopted for drug control in the region covered by ECO. A drug coordinating unit was being established to deal with liaison and serve as a bridge for effective communication, policy coordination, joint action and mutual legal assistance.

14. The Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior devoted special attention to illicit drug trafficking in the region, emphasizing control, prevention and treatment. The Council continued to undertake activities in connection with its Arab Strategy for Control of Illicit Use of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, its five-year plan and its Unified Model Arab Law for Drugs of 1986, as a guide for enacting or amending drug-related legislation. Some of the more important recent initiatives of the Council included: the adoption of the Arab Convention for Combating Illicit Use of and Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances; the adoption, in 1994, of the Unified Arab Information Plan against the Drug Phenomenon; and the compilation of a Unified Arab Schedule of Narcotic Substances under International Control, of bilateral and multilateral Arab drug-control agreements, and of a Unified List of Drug Traffickers.

15. The representative of Afghanistan explained to the Subcommission that the continuation of a devastating war during the last two decades had destroyed or severely affected the irrigation and agricultural systems of the country, thus harming the national economy, drastically reducing revenues and income, and crippling the capacity of the Government to combat illicit drug trafficking and related problems. Where law and order were disrupted or non-existent, organized crime syndicates approached illiterate and poor Afghan farmers, provided them with cash payments and credits, and persuaded them to cultivate opium poppy and cannabis for the production of hashish. Consequently, the farmers, who were already under considerable financial pressure because of adverse economic conditions, were compelled to undertake cultivation for survival, even though such acts ran counter to Islamic values, national policies and laws, and the international drug control conventions.

16. The Islamic State and Government of Afghanistan was confronted with a difficult social and national dilemma. The conditions prevailing in the country had made it the focal point of regional and global attention. Yet Afghanistan had been successful to a limited degree, despite its restricted possibilities, in its endeavours to combat illicit drugs. The Government had established contact with, and facilitated mutual understanding between, the farmers and the mujahidin commanders, already resulting in a substantial reduction in the production of poppy and hashish in the western, southern and eastern provinces of the country in 1995 and 1996. The anti-drug operations of the Government, targeting cultivation and trafficking, will be intensified as will its efforts to bring about peace, stability and the effective maintenance of law and order.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEHRAN DECLARATION AND OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE SUBCOMMISSION AT ITS THIRTIETH SESSION

17. The representative of Jordan reported that since the adoption of the Tehran Declaration by the Ministerial-level Conference at the twenty-ninth session of the Subcommission (E/CN.7/1993/CRP.5, annex I), his Government had intensified its drug-control and demand-reduction programmes, and enacted new laws concerning confiscation of assets and control of psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals.

18. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran reported that his Government, in its follow-up to the Tehran Declaration, had established 11 specialized subcommittees to conduct feasibility studies and to prepare a comprehensive national drug-control strategy. Pursuing a strict anti-drug policy and having fully eradicated poppy cultivation in 1988, the Government had managed effectively to safeguard its borders against the infiltration of illicit drugs from neighbouring States. All proceeds of illicit drug trafficking were confiscated and used to fund drug-abuse prevention activities and strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies. Chemical substances and precursors were subject to strict controls. In the last few years, leakage and seizure of precursor chemicals had not occurred, and heroin refineries had not been discovered. It was proposed that the Subcommission keep under review and examine the most suitable modalities by which the activities outlined in the Tehran Declaration could be most effectively pursued by States in the region.

19. The representative of Turkey informed the meeting of action taken by his Government to enact enabling legislation in respect of implementation of the 1988 Convention, which had been ratified by Turkey on 11 February 1995.

20. The representatives of Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lebanon and Turkey pointed out that illicit cultivation of opium poppy no longer occurred in their countries.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE THIRTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE SUBCOMMISSION

21. The Subcommission considered the advisability of examining the implementation of recommendations not one year but rather two years after their adoption. That approach would ensure that Governments had sufficient time to take action with a view to their implementation and to report on such action to the Secretariat. The Subcommission agreed to adopt that approach in the future. The agenda of its thirty-second session would therefore include no item on the implementation of the recommendations adopted at its thirty-first session.

22. The thirty-second session of the Subcommission was tentatively scheduled to be held at Baku in February 1997. The following provisional agenda was approved for that session.

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda.

3. Current situation with respect to regional and subregional cooperation.

4. Consideration of topics by working groups:

   (a) Illicit drug trafficking by sea and smuggling of drugs in containers;

   (b) Review of the establishment and functioning of cooperation mechanisms in the region;

   (c) Exchange of views and information on drug-trafficking organizations;